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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001224

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PTER CE LTTE

SUBJECT: LTTE CLOSES FIELD OFFICES AMID CEASE FIRE VIOLATIONS

REF: A. COLOMBO 1217

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) have ordered all political cadres to close field offices in the Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts of the Eastern Province and return to LTTE headquarters in Kilinochi, Northern Province. The LTTE has also ordered all 22 Tamil National Alliance (TNA) parliamentarians to Kilinochi for consultations. Following the July 10 murders of two senior political cadres, suspected LTTE members have carried out six grenade attacks against police and the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) targets of opportunity. Today July 14 the Ambassador hosted a lunch with the co-chairs of the Sri Lankan peace process. Information shared included that the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) had nominated it's representative to the P-TOMS high level committee and the LTTE had selected, but not named all it's members for the high level and regional committees. Norwegians may host talks on strengthening the cease-fire, but the LTTE has not yet agreed. It was agreed that P-TOMS could not be implemented in the current environment of Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) violations. END SUMMARY.

CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

12. (C) This is the third closure of LTTE field offices since the CFA. The LTTE told the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) that the closure was temporary, but didn't indicate for how long. It is unclear if this because of the deteriorating situation on the ground or as a harbinger of a broader response by the LTTE. A POL FSN contact with access to the LTTE reported that LTTE Eastern military commander COL Bhanu intends to continue his strategy of "filtering out", meaning assassinate, rebels from the Karuna faction and informants for the intelligence services. This campaign will also be carried out in the Colombo district.

HAVE GRENADE, WILL TRAVEL

13. (C) Since the July 10 murder of the high level LTTE cadres, there have been ten grenade or shooting attacks on GSL security forces. The attacks are uncoordinated and have resulted in no deaths. Contrary to reports in the western press, there have been NO/NO attacks on tsunami refugee camps. The attack on a military guard post outside of a refugee camp on July 13 did result in one civilian being slightly injured.

POW WOW OR WAR COUNCIL

14. (C) The TNA MPs will receive instructions from LTTE political head S. P. Thamilchelvan on July 17 in Kilinochi. It is expected to include talking points regarding the GSL refusal of the LTTE ultimatum to increase security for unarmed transiting LTTE cadres. Although not expected to break the CFA, LTTE press officer Dayan Master told the vernacular press that the LTTE will use the June 30 date of their ultimatum as their notification date for stepping away from the CFA. (NOTE: Everyone is expecting a "Big" announcement. END NOTE) According to the Norwegians, SLMM head Haukland feels the transportation issue can be solved.

NORWEGIANS MULLING CEASE FIRE TALKS

15. (C) Norwegian Charge d' Affaires Oddvar Laegreid told co-chairs on July 13 they are considering hosting a round of talks on strengthening the CFA. The GSL has agreed but the LTTE so far has been negative, citing the CFA violations. The talks would be held in Sri Lanka in, yet to be determined, neutral territory. The Ambassador pressed Laegreid for early action if possible, and Laegreid said he would discuss it in a phone call with Solheim later that afternoon. Co-chair representatives agreed there was little chance of movement on P-TOMS implementation until the cease fire issue was addressed.

P-TOMS CLUB

16. (SBU) The GSL announced Thursday morning the selection of Constitutional Affairs Minister D.E.W. Gunasekera to be their representative on the P-TOMS High level committee. The World Bank is the GSL choice to administer the P-TOMS trust fund. According to the Norwegians the LTTE have selected all members for both the High and Regional level committees. All guests at the Ambassador's lunch agreed that Muslim leaders are acting out of wounded pride more than a discernible mandate from the Muslim street. A P-TOMS project office in the east could assuage Muslim concerns and is permissible under the P-TOMS. The Sri Lanka Supreme Court is expected to announce July 15 whether it will grant interim relief to the plaintiffs in the case challenging the constitutionality of the P-TOMS agreement. A negative ruling on P-TOMS would be a severe blow for the President. All parties agreed that P-TOMS implementation will be impossible under the current level of CFA violations.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) The violence in the Trincomalee area is at a high level but does not yet, we believe, indicate a wider breakdown. The Supreme Court decision and expected LTTE pronouncement will indicate where things may be going. We believe Norwegian efforts to get the cease fire back on track are imperative.

LUNSTEAD